

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 SAJ-01 NIC-01 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04

SIL-01 /087 W

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R 260959Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8573

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMCONSUL MADRAS

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

USLO PEKING

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, UR

SUBJECT: SOVIET-INDIAN RELATIONS: MEDIA TREATMENT

REF: A) NEW DELHI 3605 (NOTAL), B) NEW DELHI 1532 (NOTAL)

1. THE "PRAVDA ARTICLE" OF MARCH 7 ON THE NARAYAN-SPONSORED MARCH ON PARLIAMENT WHICH GOT THE OPPOSITION JUICES RUNNING (REF A), WAS APPARENTLY A TASS ITEM FROM DELHI DATED MARCH 6, CARRIED IN PRAVDA MARCH 7. WE HAVE FOUND NO OTHER ARTICLES ON THE EVENT, AND OUR INDIAN COLLEAGUES HERE SAY THAT THEY ARE NOT AWARE OF ANY.

2. THE TASS ITEM IS, BY SOVIET STANDARDS, ROUTINE. IT DESCRIBES THE MARCH AS AN INDICATION THAT THE "REACTIONARY FORCES" ARE CHANGING THEIR PRACTICES FROM "DEMAGOGIC WORDS" TO "OPEN PROVOCATION." TASS SAYS THAT THE "PROVOCATEURS" WERE NOT ABLE TO ACHIEVE THEIR OBJECTIVE OF PARALYZING

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PARLIAMENT, AND GOES ON TO CITE APPROVINGLY GANDHI-FACTION

CRITICISM OF JANA SANGH LEADERS FOR ALLEGEDLY SUPPORTING THE FORCES OF INTERNATIONAL REACTION. THIS LANGUAGE MAY SEEM MORE VEHEMENT IN INDIA THAN IT DOES IN MOSCOW, WHERE SUCH TERMINOLOGY IS ROUTINELY USED TO DESCRIBE FORCES OF WHICH THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES DISAPPROVE. AMONG SUCH FORCES ARE NEARLY ALL OF THOSE IN INDIA WHO OPPOSE THE GOI, ESPECIALLY PURPORTED "RIGHTISTS." NARAYAN AND HIS FOLLOWERS CLEARLY FIT INTO THIS CATEGORY FOR SOVIET PROPAGANDA PURPOSES, ALTHOUGH MOSCOW HAS REPORTED LITTLE ABOUT THE MOVEMENT, ITS LEADER, THE ISSUES INVOLVED OR THE GROWING EXTENT OF ITS INFLUENCE.

3. IN ANOTHER RECENT MEDIA ITEM ON INDIA, PRAVDA (MARCH 19) CARRIED A SHORT TASS ITEM ABOUT THE DISCOVERY OF A PERSON CARRYING A PISTOL AT THE COURT WHERE MRS. GANDHI IS STANDING TRIAL IN ALLAHABAD. THE ITEM NOTED IN PASSING THAT SHE WAS ANSWERING CHARGES BROUGHT BY HER "RIGHTIST" OPPONENT. AND IZVESTIYA COMMENTARY OF MARCH 14 THREW COLD WATER ON HINTS OF SINO-INDIAN RAPPROACHEMENT AS A RESULT OF PEKING'S "PING-PONG DIPLOMACY" AT CALCUTTA.

4. BY FAR THE BIGGEST RECENT COVERAGE OF THINGS INDIAN WAS THE EXTENSIVE MEDIA REPLAY OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE CPI CONGRESS IN JANUARY. EMBOFF RECENTLY DISCUSSED WITH INDIAN POLITICAL COUNSELOR ARORA SOVIET MEDIA TREATMENT OF INDIA, PARTICULARLY THE IMPLIED CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE CPI PROCEEDINGS. ARORA SAID THAT THE SOVIETS OFTEN HINT THAT INDIA SHOULD MOVE MORE RAPIDLY TOWARDS "PROGRESSIVE" OR "SOCIALIST" POLICIES BY APPLAUDING ANY MOVES IN THAT DIRECTION AND BY REPLAYING CPI VIEWS. BUT THIS IS A LONG-STANDING SOVIET POSITION, HE SAID, AND DOES NOT CONSTITUTE CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT PER SE. THE SOVIETS HAVE MAINTAINED GOOD TIES WITH BOTH THE CPI AND THE GOVERNMENT FOR MANY YEARS; THEY TEND TO PLAY UP THOSE POLICIES WHICH OVERLAP AND PLAY DOWN THOSE WHICH DIFFER. IN FACT, HE SAID, MRS. GANDHI'S POSITION, ESPECIALLY ON SOCIAL ISSUES, COMES CLOSE TO THE CPI VIEW, BUT THEY DIFFER IN TIMING AND TACTICS.

5. INDIAN EMBASSY PRESS OFFICER VEENA SIKRI, COMMENTING ON INDIAN MEDIA TREATMENT OF SOVIET-ORIGIN STORIES, SAID THAT SOME WHICH ARE ROUTINE HERE ARE OFTEN EXAGGERATED IN INDIA BY CONFIDENTIAL

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THE MANNER IN WHICH THEY ARE REPLAYED. IF THEY APPEAR ONLY IN THE "PATRIOT" OR THE "NATIONAL HERALD," NO ONE PAYS MUCH ATTENTION, SHE SAID. BUT TASS AND UNI HAVE AN AGREEMENT UNDER WHICH EACH TAKES THE OTHER'S WIRE, WHICH MEANS THAT TASS STORIES ARE SOMETIMES PICKED UP BY THE "RESPECTABLE" INDIAN PRESS AS WELL. THIS GIVES A STORY WIDER DISSEMINATION BUT DOES NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT ANY GREATER IMPORTANCE IN THE SOVIET CONTEXT. SHE THOUGHT THIS HAD HAPPENED WITH BOTH THE

NARAYAN ARTICLE AND THE CHINESE PING-PONG STORY.

6. ON THE INDIAN RAIL STRIKE LAST MAY (REF B), AURORA SAID THAT HE RECALLED A FEW ITEMS IN THE SOVIET PRESS WHICH SUPPORTED THE CPI POSITION BUT SAID THAT THEY DID NOT IMPLY DIRECT OPPOSITION TO THE GOVERNMENT. WE HAVE FOUND THREE ITEMS IN PRAVDA ON THE STRIKE, AND THEY SEEM TO SUPPORT THIS INTERPRETATION: A TASS ITEM FROM MADRAS (PRAVDA MAY 6), A TASS ITEM FROM DELHI (PRAVDA MAY 13), AND AN ARTICLE BY PRAVDA'S DELHI CORRESPONDENT SHCHEDRIN (PRAVDA MAY 15). (WE DID NOT FIND ANY REFERENCE TO THE STRIKE IN NEW TIMES, AS MENTIONED REF B, EITHER IN THE JULY 19 ISSUE OR IN ISSUES A FEW WEEKS EITHER WAY FROM THAT DATE BUT WOULD SUGGEST THAT FBIS WASHINGTON CHECK THIS, IF POSSIBLE, AND ALSO PROVIDE EMBASSY NEW DELHI WITH ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE THREE PRAVDA ARTICLES.)

7. ALL THREE PRAVDA/TASS ITEMS TREAT THE STRIKE AS A MASS MOVEMENT FOR JUST ENDS BY MEMBERS OF INDIA'S WORKING CLASS AND THEY CITE SUPPORT FOR THE STRIKE BY DANGE AND THE CPI.

THEY MAKE A TORTURED EFFORT NOT TO PORTRAY THE EVENT AS ANTI-GOVERNMENT BY CITING (IN THE SECOND ARTICLE) MRS. GANDHI'S REMARKS ON AVOIDING A CONFRONTATION AND BY GLOSSING OVER REFERENCE TO GOVERNMENT MOVES AGAINST THE STRIKERS (SEE 1974 MOSCOW 7194). THE THIRD ARTICLE WAS EVEN MORE CONVOLUTED, WITH THE OPPOSITION TO THE STRIKE IDENTIFIED AS "RIGHTIST FORCES," "MONOPOLISTS," ETC. MOST SOVIET READERS WOULD BE LEFT WITH THE IMPRESSION THAT THE GOI SYMPATHIZED WITH THE STRIKERS AGAINST SOME UNSPECIFIED BUT OBVIOUSLY EVIL "RIGHTIST" FORCES.

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